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FAIRFORD CASE NO. 620254 Bernheim

MEMORANDUM

SUBJECT: The USSR's Immediate Tactical Choices.

1. The immediate Soviet objectives are to prevent the U.S. from more drastic moves which would challenge the new Soviet position in Cuba and challenge its commitment there.

2. At present, the USSR is pursuing these objectives largely with "soft" tactics -- avoidance of an early test of the quarantine, relative restraint in the 22 October TASS statement and Zorin's speech, verbal condemnations at the UN, a Security Council resolution calling for the US to cease and desist and to negotiate with Cuba and the USSR. It is trying to draw the US into negotiations, reasoning that once talks begin, the US would have great difficulty in acting unilaterally.

3. At the same time, the groundwork for a "harder" approach has been laid through vague warnings and announcements of military preparations. But the Soviet commitment to Castro has not been spelled out in as strong a fashion as previously.

4. The key element in further Soviet tactical decisions is the USSR's estimate of US intentions. If they

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- 2 -

believe that, in all likelihood, the US is determined to take further military action soon, they ~~probably will~~ not take steps which would magnify the ~~damage~~ of this next US move and expose their ~~position~~ damage when it comes. If, on the other hand, they believe that the US, in response to international pressures mobilized by the USSR, is becoming increasingly unlikely to do this, they may make strong threats in order to insure this result and later take credit for it. If they view the chances of more drastic US action as about even, they will probably take the risk of trying to influence the ~~US~~ away from this action by major threats and commitments of their own.

5. In pursuing either tactical line, the Soviets will probably see advantage in testing the quarantine within the near future. They could make this test with a non-military cargo, for example, the East German passenger ship due in Havana on 28 October, in order to make the encounter as awkward as possible for the US. If their appraisal of US intentions had led them to adopt "soft" tactics, they would probably content themselves for a few days thereafter with political exploitation, including calls for negotiation. If they had decided ~~that~~ ~~the~~ ~~best~~ ~~tactical~~

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- 3 -

tactics were required, they would immediately threaten, and perhaps carry out, retaliation against US interests elsewhere.

6. Soviet conduct at the UN, and their general political stance will hinge on this same key estimate. They have begun on a fairly mild note, designed to establish their reasonableness while they try to ascertain US intentions. Their speeches, and their positions on various resolutions, will probably become more threatening and demanding in the next few days. But they probably will not strengthen their commitments to Cuba if they foresee that the US is about to go further. Instead, they will be aiming to maximize the political costs of this action to the US and to establish a favorable position for any aggressive moves, e.g. in Berlin, which they may subsequently wish to take.

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both in conveying its intentions to the USSR and in carrying them out. As time passes, the Soviets will increasingly suspect that the US is deterred, not by stronger Soviet threats. If US action occurred after the USSR had reached this judgment and acted on it, the Soviets would have miscalculated, and their subsequent reactions might be more dangerous.

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7. Under either tactical choice, publicized military preparations in the USSR are likely. Similarly, although they anticipate further US action, disconcerted by the fact that their actions can tip the balance, they are likely to make some move in Berlin which reminds the West of its vulnerability there. But this probably will not be a major move which commits them to a second, concurrent crisis of equal intensity.

8. Whatever they expect the US to do, the Soviets are likely to consider some novel political initiatives to tie US hands or maximize US political losses. These might include:

- a. A call for a world wide summit, with Khrushchov himself departing at once for New York, if the US does not respond to current feelers for a meeting.
- b. A call for a summit including the US President.
- c. A proposal to remove the US from New York, or even to expel the US from the UN.

Implications for US Policy

9. These considerations suggest that, if the US demands further action, it would best minimize the risks by avoiding both

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7. Under either tactical choice, publicized military preparations in the USSR are likely. Similarly, whether they anticipate further US action, discount it, or think that their actions can tip the balance, they are likely to make some move in Berlin which reminds the West of its vulnerability there. But this probably will not be a major move which commits them to a second, concurrent crisis of equal intensity.

8. Whatever they expect the US to do, the Soviets are likely to consider some novel political initiatives to tie US hands or maximize US political losses. These might include:

a. A call for a world wide summit, with Khrushchev himself departing at once for New York, if the US does not respond to current feelers for a meeting.

b. A call for a summit excluding the US President.

c. A proposal to remove the UN from New York, or even expel the US from the UN.

Implications for US Policy

9. These considerations suggest that, if the US intends further action, it could best minimize the risks by speed

both in conveying its intentions to the USSR and in carrying them out. As time passes, the Soviets will increasingly suspect that the US is deterred, or could be by stronger Soviet threats. If US action occurred after the USSR had reached this judgment and acted on it, the Soviets would have miscalculated, and their subsequent reactions might be more dangerous.